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Teamster unit in drive to replace Hoffa

By Harry Bernstein
Special from the Los Angeles Times

A campaign to make Frank E. Fitzsimmons president of the teamsters union was officially begun Sunday by the 60,000-member Teamsters Joint Council 28, covering Washington and northern Idaho.

The council, at its quarterly meeting at Yakima, Wash., acted to "endorse Fitzsimmons and pledge him our full support," Arnie Weinmeister, president of the council, said.

A group of teamster leaders met in Los Angeles recently to pledge their support to Fitzsimmons. They want to make certain that imprisoned teamster president James R. Hoffa is not re-elected.

Lacks membership sanction

But the committee they formed, which says it is working for Fitzsimmons in every major union area of the nation, had no official status and was not authorized by any membership group to back Fitzsimmons.

"We have started in the Northwest and are moving quickly to consolidate our support behind Fitzsimmons, not only in the Western states, but throughout the country," one of the committee members said.

Fitzsimmons had expected to get the endorsement of all vice presidents of the 2-million-member union when they met last week in Hollywood Fla.

Hoffa reportedly has promised to resign the presidency he has held despite the four years he has served of a 13-year term for pension fund fraud and jury tampering.

Key dcision in Chicago

The promise was said to be based on the outcome of the decision by U.S. District Court Judge Richard Austin in Chicago on Hoffa's pleas to let the terms of his sentences run concurrently, which would have reduced the total time.

When Judge Austin rejected the move, Hoffa pleased with the union officers through messages relayed by two attorneys from his Lewisburg (Pa.) penitentiary cell to allow him more time to win his freedom before submitting his resignation.

Hoffa claimed to have a statement from Edward Grady Partin, one of the key witnesses against him in his 1964 jury-tampering trial, confessing that Partin had lied to the jury when he testified that Hoffa had tried to bribe jurors.

The vice presidents agreed to meet again in Washington June 3, when they have been promised "a final" message from Hoffa.

Probe of desposition

In Chattanooga, Tenn., U.S. District Court Judge Frank Wilson last Friday ordered an inquiry into the statement allegedly made by Partin in a deposition given to a reporter for the Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader, published by William Loeb, who borrowed about $1 million from the Teamsters' central states pension fund when Hoffa was the fund's chairman.

But the statement was not signed by Partin. The newspaper said the deposition was signed by several witnesses from Los Angeles after it was given in a secret meeting March 27 in Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Partin's alleged recanting of his testimony could be critical to Hoffa in the jury-tampering case, since that testimony was primarily responsible for his conviction.

Role for Audie Murphy

A similar statement from Partin was sent to the White House recently under unusual circumstances.

Audie Murphy, the actor and World War II hero, called former California Republican Sen. George Murphy, seeking entrance to the White House so the purported statement from Partin could be given to President Nixon for consideration of a pardon for Hoffa.

There was no explanation of Murphy's role in the affair. Murphy said only that he did not know the contents of the statement to be delivered to the White House and that he simply called the White House switchboard as a favor to the actor.

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sion and jobs for Hoffa's family, responded angrily to those critics.

"No benefits or so-called 'ice-cream' were held out to Jimmy for what he did," Fitzsimmons said during an angry speech. "W on his own.

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Teamster Partin case a mistrial

BUTTE, Mont. (AP) — U.S. District Court Judge W. D. Murray declared a mistrial Thursday in the conspiracy trial of Louisiana teamsters union official Edward G. Partin after the jury failed to reach a verdict.

The nine-woman, three-man jury said they were unable to agree and that they could see no chance to reach a verdict. They began deliberating Wednesday.

Partin, 46, business agent for Teamster Local 6 in Baton Rouge, La., was tried here on five counts of conspiracy in violation of the Sherman Anti-trust Act after federal courts in Louisiana granted a change of venue.

The prosecution alleged that Partin used strong-arm extortion in an attempt to gain control of the cement industry in the Baton Rouge area.